

# Hidden Italy Guided Walking Tour in Sardinia 2018

(13 days / 12 nights) - \$6,690 AUD per person

Sardinia is a magical island. Forested limestone mountains hiding ancient villages; rolling plains; pristine coastline scattered with gorgeous fishing villages; and a buzzing capital; and gracious hospitality, make it a wonderful place to explore!

The tour starts with two nights in Cagliari, then four nights in a lovely village on a tiny island off the southern coast (our visit coincides with their annual fishing festival), followed by four nights in the magnificent tranquillity of the Supramonte Mountains before finishing with two nights in a ritzy hotel on the Costa Smeralda!

## The walk:

The walks on this tour are as varied as Sardinia itself: including a guided morning walk through Cagliari's old town; spectacular walks along the island's peerless coastline; walks in the mountains with breath-taking views of the interior and a forest walk to find the ruins of a Pheonician temple. They are from 10 to 14 kilometres long, taking 3 to 5 hours, and follow good trails over mostly undulating terrain. In some cases it is possible to shorten the walk or to opt out and join the walkers for lunch. Gradings for the individual walks are on the itinerary - click the link for each day to see the details.

## The accommodation:

The accommodation is in 4-star boutique hotels: two nights in a classic hotel in the centre of Cagliari; four nights in a gorgeous family-run hotel in the heart of the old town of our second base; four nights in a luxurious country house in the mountains; and two nights in deluxe rooms with sea views in a 4-star hotel looking over the Costa Smeralda!

## The food:

Sardinian cooking is deeply rooted in its past, full of flavours nearly forgotten elsewhere. The essence of Sardinian cooking is unmistakably biased towards traditional country dishes: suckling pig and wild boar; rustic stews with wild vegetables and hearty beans; fresh pastas; mountain cheeses and boggling array of breads, including the famous carta da musica... and, of course, plenty of fresh seafood on the coast. We will eat in a variety of settings including elegant dining in Cagliari and on the Costa Smeralda; seaside osterias, country trattorias, midday picnic and lunch with shepherds in the mountains.

**Tour Dates** 28 April to 10 May 2018

**Tour Size** 7 to 15 people

**Tour Cost** \$6,690 AUD per person  
(two people sharing a double room)  
(single supplement for a double room for single use \$750 AUD)

**Tour Inclusions** 12 nights' accommodation (see the itinerary for details) in 4-star boutique hotels  
All breakfast, and all lunches and dinners listed in the itinerary  
All land and sea transfers during the tours  
All taxes and service charges at the hotels and restaurants  
All paid admissions during the tour  
7 guided walks  
Services of a full-time professional tour guide

## Sardinia itinerary.

### Day 1

Our exploration of Sardinia starts with two nights in the capital Cagliari, a buzzy but relaxed port that DH Lawrence likened to Jerusalem, "a strange and rather wonderful city". We stay in a classic 4-star hotel on the edge of the old town, a short walk from the harbour and the castle. Dinner will be at a fine seafood restaurant nearby. (Dinner)

### Day 2

We will be taken on a guided walk through the historical centre of Cagliari, including a visit to its extraordinary archaeological museum and finishing with a light lunch on the bastions with spectacular views over the city and the surrounding coast. The evening is free. (Lunch)

### Day 3

Today we drive south, past lagoons filled with pink flamingos, around some of the most pristine and beautiful coastline in Europe. On the way we will stop lovely walk along the coast, picking up tracts of a Roman road before finishing at beach classified as one of the ten best beaches on the island. We'll have a picnic lunch on the walk. (4 kms, 1.5 hrs, Grade 1)

We then continue on to the southern tip of Sardinia, taking a short hop by ferry to a very small island, staying in a lovely harbour town side (virtually car-free), our base for the next four nights. After settling into our hotel, the evening is free to explore what I feel is one of the most pleasant Italian towns I have been to in years. (Lunch)

### Day 4

This morning we walk from the village across the north tip island, following a winding trail that takes us down to a tiny bay where we'll have lunch (8 kms, 2 hrs, Grade 1). We have lunch and a wine tasting at the only wniery on the island. After lunch you'll have the option of walking back to town or getting a lift. (7kms 2.5hrs, Grade 1). In the evening we will have an alfresco dinner at the town's best restaurant. (Dinner)

### Day 5

This morning we hop back to the mainland and after a spectacular drive above the south-western cliffs we take a walk following an undulating trail through the macchia (Mediterranean scrub) over a ridge and down into a valley (where we'll pause for coffee and to visit a splendid dripstone cavern) before following sections of a Roman road up to a ridge and then down to the well-preserved remains of a Phoenician/Roman temple, standing alone in a green valley. (12 kms, 3 hrs, Grade 3)

After a picnic lunch we'll head back to our base, stopping to visit the larger neighbouring island, which has a grander history than our base, for a gelato. We hop back across the channel to our base, where the evening is free. (Lunch)

### Day 6

Today we leave the island, cross back to the mainland and drive across the plains, stopping to visit one of the most extraordinary Bronze Age sites in Sardinia, a 4000 year-old citadel recently added to UNESCO's World Heritage list.

From here we drive up through the spectacular Gennargentu Mountains, stopping for lunch, before crossing through the Supramonte, rugged limestone mountains, which until 20 years ago were Sardinia's 'badlands', an infamous hideout for the islands now extinct bandits.

We will stay for the next four days in arguably Sardinia's most celebrated hotel, a 60 year country house in the heart of the walking country. Dinner at our base. (Lunch/dinner)

### Day 7

Today we will be picked up from the hotel by two jeeps by local guide Fabrizio and his colleagues and driven up to the mountains above the town, the Supramonte, which is the north tip of the Gennargentu range. Starting at 1200 metres you will walk to the highest peak Punta Corradi, 1463 metres, to enjoy

the spectacular views over half of Sardinia, where you'll have a delicious picnic lunch of local produce, before heading back to the base. (15 kms, 5 hrs, Grade 3, it is possible to shorten this walk). (Lunch/dinner)

### **Day 8**

Today you get back into two jeeps with Fabrizio for a remarkable day exploring the heartland of Sardinia: rugged mountains, isolated villages and ancient traditions. This will include visits to the famous murals of Orgosolo (a bandit stronghold not that long ago); lunch with some local shepherds and a visit to fascinating local museum. (Lunch/dinner)

### **Day 9**

This morning Fabrizio will take you on one of the area's classic walks heading up a long valley behind our hotel, before climbing up to Mt Tiscali, a ridge where the remains of two prehistoric settlements are hidden in a huge limestone cavern – a completely stunning and unexpected sight. (14 kms, 4 hrs, Grade 2)

After a barbeque lunch, we'll head back to our hotel, time for a swim in the pool and an aperitivo before dinner. (Lunch/dinner)

### **Day 10**

Today we leave the mountains behind us and head north to one of the most celebrated bits of coastline in Europe, the Costa Smeralda, which has been a 'jetset' destination since it was developed by the Aga Khan in the 1960s. On the way we stop for a hike into a spectacular gorge, the deepest in Europe and one of the most famous sites in Sardinia. (6 kms, 2 hrs, Grade 2). We'll have a picnic lunch and then head on north, driving to our base for the next three days, a lovely resort on a quiet bay overlooking the coast. Dinner will be at the hotel's terrace restaurant. (Dinner)

### **Day 11**

Today we will enjoy a day relaxing on the hotel's two yachts, crossing the bay to explore the small archipelago that makes up the northern tip of Sardinia, including visiting an exquisite small bay with a beautiful beach that the locals nickname 'Jamaica' for its transparent water and brilliant white beach. Lunch will be served on board. In the evening we will have dinner at the hotel's restaurant. (Lunch/dinner)

### **Day 12**

As the finale, today we visit the neighbouring Costa Smeralda, taking a loop walk that starts and finishes at a lovely village, the oldest in the area. The walk takes through oak forest, under granite towers, with breath-taking views over the coast and across to Corsica (7 kms, 4 hrs, Grade 2). After lunch we return to our base, with plenty of time to pack and enjoy the pool. After a farewell aperitivo, we'll have dinner at the hotel.

### **Day 13:**

After breakfast, we'll transfer you to nearby Olbia an hour's drive away which has an airport (arriving at 10.00) and a port with ferries back to mainland Italy: to Genoa, La Spezia, Livorno (Tuscany) and Civitavecchia (Rome).